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ABSTRACT

In 1977, 8th and 12th grade students (n=889) from largely rural schools in 3 Idaho counties were surveyed as representative of both early and late stages of the teenage period to determine levels and patterns of liquor consumption. Respondents categorized themselves as nondrinkers (NDs), seldom drinkers (SDs), occasional drinkers (ODs), and frequent drinkers (FDs). Findings contradicted other studies by reflecting an unexpectedly high incidence of rural student drinking. Drinking increased from grade 8 to grade 12: 16% of 8th graders were FDs, while 34% of 12th graders were FDs; 34% of 8th graders were NDs, while 19% of 12th graders were NDs. Liquor was usually acquired from friends or parents. Frequent drinkers from both groups reported high percentages of close friends who also drank frequently, reflecting peer role in drinking, while nondrinkers were most influenced by their parents. Outside information sources (mass media) about effects of drinking were most influential with 12th grade SDs, ODs, and FDs, while 12th grade NDs and all 8th graders perceived parents to be the best source of information about drinking. Parents, school personnel, community organizations, peer counselors, and mass media sources can contribute to alcohol education by focusing on responsible drinking behavior. (MM)

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Teenage Drinking In Idaho's Rural Communities



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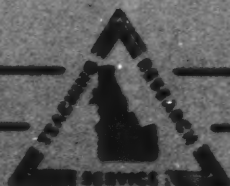
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Teenage Drinking In Idaho's Rural Communities

M. L. Lassey and J. E. Carlson

Introduction

Social problems are in part a function of institutional arrangements in local communities. Small, rural communities suffering from either out-migration or population growth are often faced with problems of limited programs and inadequate facilities. The tendency to ignore the public provision of varied recreational outlets for teenagers or adults is widely prevalent. Further, investment is often severely limited in services for treatment of problem drinking or other mental health problems among adults or teenagers.

This study examined one important dimension of social problems in a rural region of Idaho. Teenage drinking not only creates adjustment problems for the individuals involved but creates severe strains on involved families, leads to automobile accidents, creates problems in schools and generally contributes to social costs in rural communities.

Several issues are important to understanding the significance of drinking among teenagers in rural areas. Initially, the question must be raised about the amount of drinking among youth. What causes young people to drink and what social environments provide constraints or encouragement to drinking are related issues. Finally, there is the question of whether a relationship exists between drinking patterns and satisfaction with the community environment.

The data analyzed here provide information on these issues for rural youth in northern Idaho. The communities from which these data were taken vary in size and complexity but share a dependence on natural resource based employment and a rather limited tax base for provision of public services. The principal industries are lumbering, wood processing and livestock or wheat farming. The larger communities are commercial centers serving these industries and have a high proportion of students whose parents are involved in local business.

The Survey

The study population included all eighth and twelfth grade students from largely rural schools in three counties. Eighth and twelfth graders were chosen for study because they represent both the early and late stages of the teenage period. All school officials were quite willing to allow data to be collected, which suggests a strong concern about understanding the nature of teenage drinking and resolution of any serious problems revealed by the study.

Items in the questionnaire were heavily based on earlier studies. However, several new questions were developed to seek data that had not been examined previously. In all cases, the questionnaires were administered by the principal investigator or a graduate assistant. A prepared set of instructions was used to encourage consistency of questionnaire administration in the classroom setting. Data collection was completed during a 3-month period ending in January 1977.

The 889 students involved in the study were predominantly white (96 percent), but there were 19 (2 percent) native Americans and 19 (2 percent) "others." Ten percent of the respondents were from situations where the mother was head of the household. Eighty-six percent were from homes where the father was head, and the remaining 4 percent were from homes where other family members were responsible for children.

Although no student refused to respond to the questions, a few students gave facetious responses or did not complete their questionnaires. Facetious items or incomplete questions were eliminated. Therefore, considerable variation appears in the total numbers in the tables.

Data were collected on consumption of beer, wine and liquor, but only the predominant pattern — beer drinking — is analyzed in detail here. One table indicates the extent of drinking for all three beverages.

Definitions

For analysis and discussion, the respondents were grouped into the following four categories:

- **Nondrinkers (NDs)** — respondents who reported never drinking beer, wine or liquor.
- **Seldom drinkers (SDs)** — respondents who reported drinking about one time a year.
- **Occasional drinkers (ODs)** — respondents who reported drinking at least one or two times a month.
- **Frequent drinkers (FDs)** — respondents who reported drinking at least one or two times a week.

The Basic Issues

Research on problem drinking among teenagers has concentrated heavily in urban settings. Little investigation has been done on the use of alcohol among people reared in rural or small communities.

Earlier reports show variations from 34 to 86 percent in samples of high school students who "report drinking at least occasionally" (Adler and Loteka 1973, Bacon and Jones 1968, Globetti 1972, Harford 1976, Maddox and McCall 1967, Rachal et al. 1975 and Weschler and Thum 1973). High school students from rural areas have apparently tended to drink less (Globetti and Windham 1967 and Glassco 1975).

For example, Bacon and Jones (1968) report that 44 percent of rural Kansas teenagers, as compared to 86 percent in more urban Nassau County, New York, drink at least on some occasions. In a recent national study, metropolitan youth were less likely to be abstainers than nonmetropolitan youth (Rachal et al. 1975).

Although only a small proportion of teenagers may be considered as problem drinkers, a study in New York indicates that youthful drinking may be closely related to later problem drinking; "those who start imbibing before the seventh grade become more frequent and heavier drinkers than those who begin later" (U.S. News and World Report, November 24, 1975: 28). Because so little research has been done on drinking in rural areas, little data on the degree of problem drinking are available. Such information is important for development and promotion of more adequate educational and action programs.

Factors Influencing Drinking Behavior

Studies have shown that drinking behavior is associated with sex, age, peer relationships and nature of the home situation (Kane and Patterson

1972). Most studies report that males tend to drink more than females at all ages (Alexander 1969, Forslund and Gustafson 1970, Globetti 1972, Harford 1976, Maddox 1964b, Preston 1968 and Rachal et al. 1975). However, Weschler and Thum (1973) found no sex difference among senior high school students. Bacon and Jones (1968) noted that the difference between boys and girls in rural areas is greater at early age levels.

Several studies have examined peer group pressures and problem drinking. Kane and Patterson (1972) studied the social and demographic characteristics of 19,929 Kentucky high school students and concluded that drinking teenagers tended to have drinkers as their closest friends and classmates. Numerous other studies revealed a positive relationship between peer group affiliation and teenage drinking (Adler and Loteka 1973, Alexander 1969, Alexander 1975, Alexander and Campbell 1967, Forslund and Gustafson 1970, Globetti and Windham 1967, Jessor and Jessor 1975 and Preston 1968-1969).

On the other hand, some investigators have taken the position that the role and influence of peer group pressures on youthful problem drinking is distorted and, if anything, overemphasized in the literature. Maddox (1964a) has claimed that "many adolescents would learn to drink if there were no contact with peer groups whatsoever." A large proportion of adolescents continue to be nondrinkers even when they associate regularly with groups of adolescents who drink.

Nonetheless, Adler and Loteka (1973) reported that peer groups have an important influence on teenage drinking behavior: the particular nature of those relationships has not been clearly established. However, drinking behavior of close friends and number of close friends seem to be of considerable significance. In addition to these influences, other factors perceived by young people as important, such as the credibility teenagers attribute to sources of information about drinking, deserve examination.

Community Satisfaction

Rural communities are often promoted as the best places to rear children. However, as noted earlier, rural communities often lack facilities and programs for youth. It has been shown that "the more satisfied the respondent to accessibility to selected opportunities and facilities, the more satisfied he is with the community" (Ladewig and McCann 1980). If rural communities are indeed deficient in providing recreational programs, teenagers' satisfaction with their home communities may reflect such inadequacies. Furthermore, dissatisfaction with the community may increase the tendency of a person to drink.

Drinking is usually viewed as a recreational activity. If other recreational activities are not available, drinking may serve as a substitute. Although previous research has not addressed this issue, it seems important in understanding problem drinking within rural communities.

Drinking Behavior

Table 1 summarizes the extent of drinking in the study area. Sixteen percent of the eighth graders considered themselves frequent beer drinkers (FDs), 24 percent were occasional beer drinkers (ODs), 27 percent were seldom drinkers (SDs) and 34 percent were nondrinkers (NDs).

Among twelfth graders, 34 percent were frequent beer drinkers (FDs), 31 percent were occasional drinkers (ODs), 17 percent were seldom drinkers (SDs) and 19 percent classified themselves as nondrinkers (NDs). Although many of the teenagers in the survey drank wine and liquor, beer was clearly the most popular alcoholic beverage consumed.

These findings were unexpected inasmuch as a larger proportion of teenagers reported drinking at least occasionally than most other studies had shown (Adler and Loteka 1973, Glassco 1975, Globetti 1972, Globetti and Windham 1967, Harford 1976, Maddox 1964b and Weschler and Thum 1973).

Table 1. Drinking behavior.

	Beer	Wine	Liquor
	(%)	(%)	(%)
8th graders			
FD*	16	7	8
OD	24	22	17
SD	27	35	30
ND	34	36	45
	(N = 445)	(N = 446)	(N = 447)
12th graders			
FD	34	6	10
OD	31	23	25
SD	17	37	36
ND	19	33	29
	(N = 417)	(N = 414)	(N = 414)

*FD (frequent drinkers) — respondents who reported drinking beer at least one or two times a week; OD (occasional drinkers) — respondents who reported drinking about one or two times a month; SD (seldom drinkers) — respondents who reported drinking at least one time a year; ND (nondrinkers) — respondents who reported never drinking alcohol.

This may imply that rural youth tend to drink at a higher rate than youth in general, or the rate of drinking may be higher in rural communities with minimal alternative recreational outlets. It is also possible that drinking rates in general have risen since the earlier studies. In any case, the high rate of alcoholic beverage consumption seems startling regardless of the possible explanations.

Location of Drinking

The most common "place of first drink" was at home for both occasional drinkers and frequent drinkers (Table 2); the most frequent places for later drinking were at parties or in cars (Table 3). This finding is in contrast to Globetti's (1969) finding that the place of first drinking was outside the home.

As students move through high school, their drinking appears to become more centered in the peer group and less associated with the home. Availability of transportation is no doubt an important factor in this transition.

Securing Alcohol

Most of the drinkers obtained alcoholic beverages from friends the same age or older (Table 4). For example, 60 percent of the eighth grade ODs and 62 percent of the eighth grade FDs obtained alcoholic beverages from friends, 27 percent of the ODs and 24 percent of the FDs secured the alcoholic beverages from parents and older relatives. Only 10 percent of the ODs and 8 percent of the FDs admitted to securing alcoholic beverages from home without a parent's knowledge.

Table 4. Securing alcohol.

	Parents and older relatives (%)	Friends same age or older (%)	Bootlegger (%)	From home w/o parents' knowledge (%)
8th graders				
FD (N = 63)	24	62	6	8
OD (N = 88)	27	60	2	10
SD (N = 97)	56	37	3	4
12th graders				
FD (N = 125)	7	88	3	2
OD (N = 125)	8	91	1	0
SD (N = 60)	28	72	0	0

Table 2. Location of initial drinking.

	Home (%)	Friend's home (%)	Relative's home (%)	Other adult's home (%)	A party (%)	Somebody's car (%)	In the country (%)	At a bar (%)	At a dance (%)	Other (%)
8th graders										
FD (N = 74)	49	8	3	3	14	8	6	0	3	5
OD (N = 105)	43	14	11	2	10	4	9	1	3	4
SD (N = 115)	50	10	15	2	4	2	8	0	3	7
12th graders										
FD (N = 141)	36	16	4	1	16	9	6	0	4	8
OD (N = 129)	33	10	6	3	15	19	8	0	2	5
SD (N = 68)	29	19	12	4	10	15	4	0	0	6

Table 3. Most frequent place of drinking.

	Home (%)	Friend's home (%)	Relative's home (%)	Other adult's home (%)	A party (%)	Somebody's car (%)	In the country (%)	At a bar (%)	At a dance (%)	Other (%)
8th graders										
FD (N = 73)	22	14	1	1	23	23	5	0	4	6
OD (N = 103)	24	30	4	2	18	4	10	0	3	6
SD (N = 114)	47	11	9	3	6	3	10	0	5	7
12th graders										
FD (N = 134)	10	8	2	0	25	40	7	3	1	5
OD (N = 128)	12	14	2	1	23	36	9	1	2	1
SD (N = 64)	30	9	5	3	30	19	3	0	0	2

Among the twelfth graders, 91 percent of the ODs and 88 percent of the FDs obtained the beverages from friends, while 8 percent of the ODs and 7 percent of the FDs obtained the beverages from parents or older relatives. Again, the transition from family or home to peer group support of drinking was clear as respondents got older, but obviously both eighth and twelfth graders most often obtained alcoholic beverages from friends.

Factors Influencing Drinking Behavior

Several factors influence the drinking patterns of rural youth. For example, factors of major importance are male or female status, influence of friends and the number of friends who drink.

Beer Drinking by Sex

Table 5 shows there were substantial sex differences in beer drinking among the respondents at the

Table 5. Beer drinking among males and females.

	Male (%)	Female (%)
8th graders		
FD	19	12
OD	28	19
SD	25	27
ND	28	42
	(N = 215)	(N = 201)
12th graders		
FD	43	25
OD	35	27
SD	10	24
ND	13	24
	(N = 212)	(N = 203)

eighth grade level and even more pronounced divergence in the twelfth grade. For example, 19 percent of the eighth grade males can be classified as FDs compared to 12 percent of the females; 28 percent of the eighth grade males are ODs compared to 19 percent of their female classmates; 42 percent of the eighth grade females are NDs whereas 28 percent of the males are so classified. This finding is somewhat contradictory to Bacon's and Jones' (1968) finding that in rural areas twice as many females drink in the 14 to 15 age group.

Among the twelfth graders, 43 percent of the males compared to 25 percent of the females are FDs. Thirty-five percent of the males and 27 percent of the females are ODs while 10 percent of the males and 24 percent of the females are SDs. Thirteen percent of the males and 24 percent of the females are NDs.

Males are clearly more likely to drink beer than are females, and the difference increases among twelfth graders. Apparently males are more likely than females to become frequent drinkers during their high school years, but a substantial proportion of females also become drinkers during high school.

These findings are in contrast to Weschler's and Thum's work (1973) which suggested there were no sex differences related to drinking among senior high school students. Again, the implication is that drinking is more normative for males in "rural" communities than it is for females — not an unexpected finding since the tradition of less female "liberation" remains stronger in rural communities than in urban areas.

Table 6. Frequency of drinking by proportion of close friends who drink.

	None (%)	A few (%)	About half (%)	More than half (%)	3/4 or more (%)
8th graders					
FD	2	4	16	32	43
OD	4	22	29	34	33
SD	24	37	29	21	17
ND	70	37	26	13	8
	(N = 92)	(N = 138)	(N = 62)	(N = 53)	(N = 89)
Gamma* = -.61					
12th graders					
FD	5	0	18	30	54
OD	14	33	33	43	29
SD	14	27	22	21	11
ND	68	39	27	6	6
	(N = 22)	(N = 66)	(N = 67)	(N = 53)	(N = 207)
Gamma* = -.62					

*Gamma indicates the degree of association between the drinking behavior of the respondents and their best friends. A gamma near zero indicates that knowledge of a best friend's drinking behavior does not increase ability to predict the respondent's drinking behavior. A positive number near one indicates that if a best friend drinks, the respondent is also likely to drink.

Peer Group Influences — Drinking Behavior of Friends

Table 6 clearly indicates a positive relationship between having friends who drink and frequency of drinking, among both the eighth and twelfth graders. Among eighth graders, for example, those who had three-fourths or more of their best friends who drank were 20 times more likely to be frequent drinkers. At the twelfth grade level, the contrast was less extreme but remained strong. Conversely, more than eight times as many students who had no friends who drank were also nondrinkers. In sum, teenagers who drink tend to associate with other teenagers who also drink.

Among the eighth grade students, those with a best friend who did not drink were four times more likely to be nondrinkers than those whose best friend drank (Table 7). The ratio was 6:1 for twelfth graders; the influence of the best friend's drinking behavior on nondrinkers appears to have been stronger for twelfth graders than for eighth graders.

These findings provide strong support for the findings of Adler and Loteka (1973), Alexander (1969 and 1975), Alexander and Campbell (1968), Forslund and Gustafson (1970), Globetti (1972), Kane and Patterson (1972), Preston (1968-1969) and Weschler and Thum (1973). Conversely, Maddox's (1964b) assertion that the role of the peer group has been overemphasized is not supported.

Peer Group Influences — Number of Friends and Ability To Make Friends

The number of friends also seems to be relevant. Eighth graders in the survey with four or more friends were more likely to be frequent drinkers than those with less than four friends (Table 8). Con-

sely, those with less than four friends were more likely to be nondrinkers. Number of friends did not seem to make much difference for twelfth graders.

Frequency of drinking did not seem to relate significantly to the ability to make friends among eighth graders. However, twelfth graders who were more frequent drinkers indicated that it was easier for them to make friends. Perhaps this was so because a drinking friendship group is more likely to have been established by this age than at the eighth grade level (Table 9).

Family Influences — Fathers' Drinking Behavior

A father's drinking behavior was associated strongly with the drinking patterns of the children in the survey (Table 10). For eighth graders, a greater proportion of fathers who were nondrinkers also

Table 8. Frequency of drinking by number of friends.

	0 to 3	4 or more
	(%)	(%)
8th graders		
FD	11	19
OD	20	26
SD	27	27
ND	43	28
	(N = 164)	(N = 275)
	Gamma = -.27	
12th graders		
FD	32	35
OD	32	31
SD	19	16
ND	17	19
	(N = 144)	(N = 268)
	Gamma = -.03	

Table 7. Frequency of drinking by influence of best friend.

	Does your best friend drink?	
	Yes	No
	(%)	(%)
8th graders		
FD	25	4
OD	34	8
SD	25	28
ND	15	61
	(N = 256)	(N = 167)
	Gamma = .74	
12th graders		
FD	41	8
OD	34	20
SD	17	17
ND	9	56
	(N = 332)	(N = 77)
	Gamma = .73	

Table 9. Frequency of beer drinking by ability to make friends in town.

	Easy to make friends	Hard to make friends
	(%)	(%)
8th graders		
FD	15	19
OD	25	19
SD	27	26
ND	33	36
	(N = 321)	(N = 110)
	Gamma = .03	
12th graders		
FD	36	26
OD	33	26
SD	15	21
ND	17	27
	(N = 328)	(N = 77)
	Gamma = .11	

Table 10. Frequency of students' drinking by frequency of fathers' drinking.

	Father's drinking pattern		
	Frequent drinkers	Drinkers	Non-drinkers
	(%)	(%)	(%)
8th graders			
FD	21	19	9
OD	25	28	18
SD	25	29	26
ND	29	25	47
	(N = 171)	(N = 118)	(N = 137)
Gamma = .20			
12th graders			
FD	37	35	30
OD	33	35	22
SD	15	17	17
ND	15	13	26
	(N = 153)	(N = 102)	(N = 149)
Gamma = .11			

Table 11. Frequency of students' drinking by frequency of mothers' drinking.

	Mother's drinking pattern		
	Frequent drinkers	Drinkers	Non-drinkers
	(%)	(%)	(%)
8th graders			
FD	24	21	10
OD	35	25	19
SD	18	26	30
ND	24	27	41
	(N = 89)	(N = 114)	(N = 226)
	Gamma = .28		
12th graders			
FD	42	38	28
OD	28	36	30
SD	15	9	22
ND	15	17	20
	(N = 81)	(N = 106)	(N = 221)
	Gamma = .19		

Table 12. Frequency of drinking by predominant influence.

	Parents	Friends	Police	Teachers	Religious leaders	Counselors	Other
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
8th graders							
FD (N = 59)	29	58	0	3	0	0	10
OD (N = 87)	32	56	0	0	1	1	9
SD (N = 109)	53	34	0	1	0	0	11
ND (N = 133)	59	15	0	1	2	1	20
12th graders							
FD (N = 123)	10	60	4	1	2	0	24
OD (N = 120)	15	65	2	1	1	0	17
SD (N = 63)	21	52	0	0	2	2	24
ND (N = 66)	53	17	0	0	5	0	26

had children who were nondrinkers. Fathers who were frequent drinkers had a somewhat greater proportion of children in the frequent drinking category. The influence of a nondrinking father appeared to decline as the age of the respondent increased; twelfth graders with nondrinking fathers were much more inclined to drink than eighth graders with nondrinking fathers.

Family Influences — Mothers' Drinking Behavior

Findings for both maternal and paternal influences were similar, with the exception of the nondrinking mother (Table 11). The nondrinking mother appeared to have more influence on the drinking pattern of eighth graders than on twelfth graders. However, the influence of the mother appears to be less than the father for both grades.

These findings lend support to numerous studies (Adler and Loteka 1973, Bacon and Jones 1968, Forslund and Gustafson 1970, Harford 1976, Globetti 1972 and Globetti and Windham 1967) which demonstrated a relationship between parental and teenage drinking behaviors.

Relative Influence of Friends, Parents and Other Adults

Both family and peer group socialization were important correlates of drinking in this study. Further, peer group influence clearly increased with age while parental influence diminished. Parents were more influential than friends, police, teachers, religious leaders and counselors with nondrinkers in both eighth and twelfth grades (Table 12).

The pattern changed for eighth and twelfth graders who are FDs. Both groups were much more influenced by their friends. This lends support to Adler's and Loteka's (1973) findings. The shift from parent to peer orientation is apparently most pronounced for those eighth graders who start as seldom drinkers (rather than nondrinkers) and become heavier drinkers.

Table 13. Frequency of drinking by credibility of information about effects of drinking.

	Parents	Friends	Police	Teachers	Religious leaders	Counselors	Mass media	Other
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
8th graders								
FD (N = 71)	34	3	14	4	4	20	4	17
OD (N = 98)	41	2	9	4	1	22	11	9
SD (N = 106)	45	2	12	2	3	17	12	7
ND (N = 132)	38	3	11	4	4	17	10	14
12th graders								
FD (N = 135)	19	4	7	2	2	22	25	19
OD (N = 125)	18	2	16	0	0	18	26	20
SD (N = 66)	21	0	9	2	3	18	27	20
ND (N = 69)	26	4	13	6	6	15	20	10

Credibility of Information Sources

Eighth graders in all the drinking categories — NDs, SDs, ODs and FDs — perceived their parents as "the best place to get correct information about the effects of drinking." Counselors were chosen as the next most credible source (Table 13).

The findings were somewhat different for twelfth graders. Parents were most frequently selected by

NDs, followed by the mass media. For the SDs, ODs and the FDs, the mass media were clearly perceived as the best source. Adler and Loteka (1973), however, found that imbibing teenagers saw friends as the most trusted source of information, whereas the mass media were considered the best source for the nonusers. Counselors were considered the second best source by the FDs, followed by family.

Community Relationships

Earlier it was suggested that drinking behavior may be influenced by teenagers' perceptions of the community in which they live. Two aspects of this relationship — satisfaction with community and community friendships — are examined here.

Satisfaction with Community

Almost three-fourths of both eighth and twelfth graders in the study stated they would not move from their communities if they could. Among eighth graders who would move from their hometowns if they could, there was no difference in their frequency of drinking. However, twelfth graders who would leave town are more likely to be frequent drinkers.

Table 14. Frequency of drinking by satisfaction with present residence.

	I would move from this town tomorrow If I could	
	No	Yes
	(%)	(%)
8th graders		
FD	12	26
OD	23	26
SD	29	23
ND	37	26
	(N = 312)	(N = 121)
	Gamma = -.21	
12th graders		
FD	29	44
OD	33	28
SD	17	15
ND	21	14
	(N = 121)	(N = 117)
	Gamma = -.14	

Eighth graders who would not move from town were more likely to be nondrinkers, whereas twelfth graders who would not move were slightly more likely to be frequent or occasional drinkers (Table 14).

About 75 percent of both the eighth and twelfth graders liked their neighborhoods. However, the two grade levels differed in terms of the relationship between affection for neighborhood and frequency of drinking. For eighth graders, both those who liked and those who disliked their neighborhoods were more likely to be nondrinkers, although a lower drinking frequency existed for those who liked their neighborhood. For twelfth graders, the direction was reversed with greater satisfaction and dissatisfaction (in approximately equal percentages) existing among drinkers.

Table 15. Frequency of beer drinking by "whether I like my neighborhood."

	Like	Dislike
	(%)	(%)
8th graders		
FD	13	20
OD	24	25
SD	27	26
ND	36	29
	(N = 136)	(N = 106)
	Gamma = -.15	
12th graders		
FD	33	39
OD	33	24
SD	16	18
ND	19	19
	(N = 316)	(N = 93)
	Gamma = -.04	

Summary and Conclusions

At least 16 percent of eighth graders and 34 percent of twelfth graders in north central Idaho counties said that they drank frequently. A much higher proportion of each age level said they drank occasionally. Both eighth and twelfth graders said they had their first drink at home. Home was also the most frequent drinking place for the eighth graders, while cars were the most common drinking place for the twelfth graders. Both groups got alcoholic beverages primarily from their friends.

A strong relationship, particularly among twelfth graders, existed between drinking and friendship patterns. In both age groups, those respondents who said they had four or more close friends were more likely to drink. A direct relationship between parental drinking behavior and youth drinking behavior existed, but this relationship diminished as the age of the youth increased. Friends were the most influential factors among frequent drinkers in both grades.

Eighth and twelfth grade nondrinkers felt that parents were the best source of information about alcohol. The same was true for eighth graders who drank. However, the twelfth grade drinkers felt that mass media were the most credible information sources. Frequent drinkers in the twelfth grade were more likely than nondrinkers to want to move from their communities.

Possible Alternatives

If the social and health problems associated with drinking are to be alleviated over the long run, it seems essential that new or additional institutional arrangements be started to provide alternative outlets and treatment. Such arrangements should focus resources on the resolution of both teenage and adult drinking problems.

Programs might be developed in the schools and in adult education programs to systematically increase awareness of drinking's consequences. Such programs might present alternatives that might provide equivalent or greater satisfaction than alcohol. Also, much better use could be made of the mass media to present accurate information about drinking and alcohol.

Obviously, the legal constraint prohibiting sale of alcoholic beverages to teenagers is of limited value. Intoxicants seem to be readily available to those who are willing to assume the risk of acquisition. More persistent nonlegalistic measures also seem to be in order.

Programs Involving Parents

Given the clear influence of parents, particularly of parents of younger children, it seems essential that parents be actively involved in alcohol education. For example, organizations such as Parent Teachers Association (PTA) have initiated prevention programs focused on parents and schools. A project entitled "Alcohol: A Family Affair" was developed in 1976 to assist parents, teachers and students. A brochure includes guidelines for discussing alcohol use. The PTA has also emphasized programs to make parents more aware of their importance as role models, in part by deliberately bringing parents and teenagers together for discussions of the drinking issue (Kimmel 1976).

School Programs

Idaho Code #33-1605 specifically requires:

In all school districts there shall be instructions in health and physical fitness including effects of alcohol, stimulants, tobacco and narcotics on the human system. The State Board of Education shall cause to be prepared such study guides, materials and reference lists as it may deem necessary to make effective the provisions of this section (1963; Ch. 13, 180, p. 27).

Obviously, if the programs prescribed by the legislature are to be effective, teachers and other school personnel need training to adequately undertake the instruction. For example, a model program (the Caspar Alcohol Education Program) has been established in Sommerville, Massachusetts, which provides workshops for training teachers on alcohol education and innovative teaching methods (NIAAA 1977). The project core consists of basic and advanced workshops for selected teachers in grades 3 to 12.

A program in eastern Washington (Whitman County Alcohol Information and Referral Center) trains volunteers to conduct programs in public schools throughout the county, using audiovisual and other advanced communication techniques. In schools where principals prefer that instruction come from school personnel, staff members train teachers to conduct the program.¹ Similarly, a school curriculum² designed to help young people understand human behavior and its sociological

¹Personal communication with Dr. Tina Fuchini-Miller, director, Alcohol Information and Referral Center, Pullman, Washington, May 16, 1977.

²Personal communication with Carolyn Rogers, Regional Substance Abuse Coordinator, White Pine Mental Health Center, June 24, 1977.

consequences is available in several Idaho counties and includes factual information about alcohol.

An alcohol education curriculum for kindergarten through twelfth grade has been developed in Seattle, Washington. The curriculum can be used as part of traditional subject areas or as a separate unit. It includes instructional games, films and teachers' manuals. Teacher training workshops and teacher assistance are available for implementing the program in the classroom (NIAAA 1977).

Peer Counseling

The data described in this report suggest forcefully that peers are the most predominant influence on alcohol use as students get older. Peer counseling to reach youth is basic in several successful programs such as the Teenage Alcohol Abuse Prevention Program of New York City (NIAAA 1977).

Well prepared peer counselors may be the most effective single group in influencing drinking behavior of other teenagers. Materials and training may be designed for peer counseling in rural areas.

Mass Media Development

The mass media are seen as a strong influence, particularly by older teenagers. The Seattle Alcohol Education Curriculum uses films and other audio visual media (NIAAA 1977). The PTA uses brochures, daily and weekly newspapers, radio and television broadcasts, wire services and the special education press (Kimmel 1976).

Community Organization

Programs to prevent frequent drinking should focus in part on increasing the adequacy of community organizations to meet teenagers' needs. Additional community based activities may often be needed, particularly for those teenagers who may be alienated from school.

In some instances, a community and school steering committee may be helpful in planning programs for alcohol education for many community units, particularly families, the school, organizations and youth groups (NIAAA 1977).

The National PTA strongly encourages active student participation in community activities as one outlet for youth activity that tends to decrease the likelihood of alcohol abuse. Local 4-H clubs have often taken an active part in educating teenagers about drinking. However, young people have tended to lose interest in such clubs after about age 14.³

A rural Wisconsin program focuses on the family, schools, peers, mass media and the community. The

Marshall Project is comprehensive, broad based and involves many dimensions of the community in locating and working with drinking teenagers. This prototype model may provide a useful starting point for other communities. Packaged units include health curriculum, videotapes of the physiological aspects of alcohol abuse and parent effectiveness courses. The program also spells out a design of community links with clergy, police, PTA and other groups.

Treating Severe Alcohol Abuse

Several programs exist for teenagers who have severe alcohol abuse problems. For example, a program of court referrals in Latah County, Idaho, offers information and resources to solve drinking problems. However, this service is not available unless the teenager is involved in court proceedings.⁴

In Whitman County, Washington, an Alcohol Information School works with youth who have been referred because of involvement with alcohol. The program includes information and counseling for both youth and parents.

In sum, responsibility for focusing attention on the problems of alcohol and youth rests not only with the formal educational system but also with other community institutions. As one noted authority prescribed:

I am suggesting that we explore methods by which, within the home and outside the home, in a variety of settings, such as school, college and community, those who are likely to use alcoholic beverages — especially children of drinking parents — undergo educational experience in responsible use of alcohol (Chafetz 1973).

Chafetz feels the potential for creating social responsibility, including "responsible drinking behavior by those who choose to drink" lies with the educational institutions, the mass media and the family. He emphasizes the need to inform the student, "not to threaten or frighten him."

Rural communities and outside institutions must be realistic about what is believable to teenagers. Young people are not likely to be persuaded that abstinence is appropriate when such a significant proportion of parents, teachers and visible public leaders drink socially. The focus should be on known harmful or dangerous effects of alcohol abuse; parents, schools, peers, health professionals, the mass media and other community units should share responsibility for comprehensive programs. Also, if drinking is to be perceived as less attractive to teenagers, alternative outlets for youthful energy seem essential to help fill leisure hours productively.

³Personal communication with Penny Morgan, Latah County Extension 4-H Youth Agent, June 10, 1977.

⁴Personal communication with Karolyn Rogers, June 24, 1977.

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